

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck ND 58505**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**N.D.'s New Autism Services Voucher Program is now available
*Families are encouraged to apply***

BISMARCK, N.D. – The N.D. Department of Human Services announced today that families of children ages three through 17 diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder who meet income requirements can apply, beginning today, for a new voucher program to help pay for assistive technology, training, and other approved support services that enhance the quality of life of children with autism disorders and help meet the unique needs of families caring for them.

“The goal is to address gaps in non-therapy related services and to provide more support to families,” said Trisha Page, the department’s Autism Services Coordinator.

The number of families benefitting from the new voucher program for children will depend on the unique needs of participating children and their families, Page said.

Lawmakers created the pilot voucher program in 2013 as part of House Bill 1038. It provides vouchers totaling up to \$12,500 per year per qualifying child to help eligible families with the cost of supporting a child with autism. Early intervention and therapy services are not covered by the voucher program.

To qualify for voucher services and items, a family’s gross income cannot exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level. That is currently \$39,580 for a household of three and \$47,700 for a household of four. An income chart and information about autism-related services is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/autism/index.html.

Lawmakers appropriated \$539,186 in state general fund dollars for a one-year pilot voucher program during the 2013-2015 biennium. Covered services and supports are described in Century Code section 50-06-32.1, which can be found online at www.legis.nd.gov/cencode/t50c06.pdf?20140701141544.

Categories of covered services and supports include assistive technology equipment, video modeling DVDs or equipment, language generating devices, training and educational materials for parents, sensory equipment, tutoring, safety equipment, self-care equipment, and registration and related expenses for workshops or training to improve independent living skills, decision-making, and social skills. In addition, the voucher can pay for memberships and related fees to community organizations and specialized camps, and can pay for specialized care services including autism-specific child care and respite care. Adaptive sports and activities, and transportation directly related to voucher-funded services may also be covered.

For more information, contact N.D. Department of Human Services’ Autism Services Coordinator Trisha Page at 701-328-8949, toll free 800-755-2719, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, fax 701-328-8969, or email tpage@nd.gov.

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